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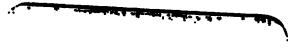
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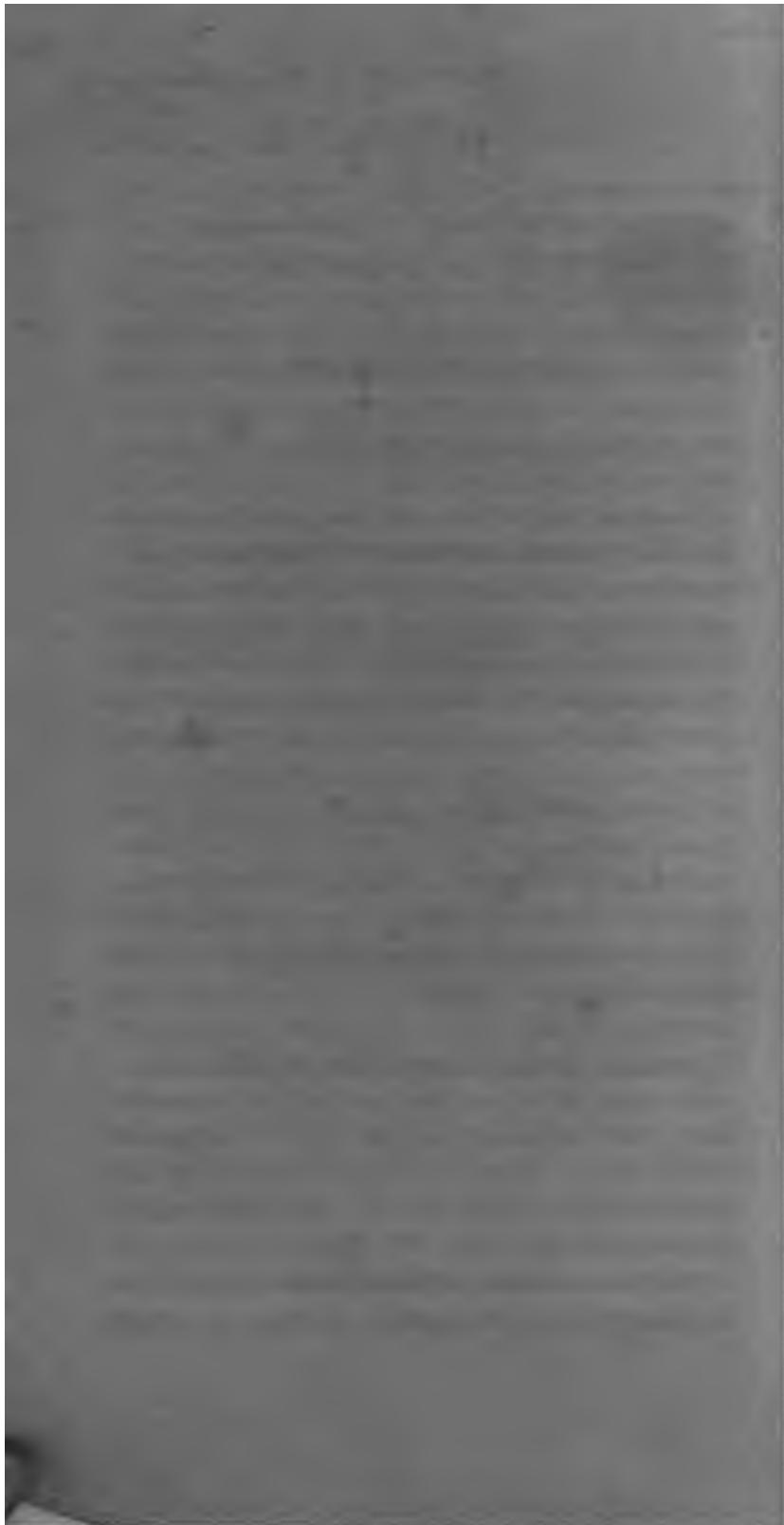
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Rev. A. B. Huzzey
from his friend
James H. Hodge

MR. HEDGE'S ORATION.

FOURTH OF JULY, 1838.



AN

O R A T I O N,

PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE

C I T I Z E N S O F B A N G O R,

ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1838.

THE SIXTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY

F R E D E R I C H . H E D G E .

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CITY GOVERNMENT.

B A N G O R:

S A M U E L S . S M I T H , P R I N T E R .

1838.

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ORATION.

FELLOW CITIZENS:—I congratulate you on the sixty-second anniversary of American Independence. In discharging the duty assigned to me on this occasion, I am happy to meet an assembly like this, convened on the broad ground of American citizenship. Other grounds and other interests have been made too prominent, of late years, in the celebration of this day. The day belongs not to any partial interest or single cause, however sacred in itself. It belongs to the American citizen—a name, an interest which includes all others and transcends all others. The day is national, and strictly national should our celebration of it be. Other interests shall have their due. Education, Temperance—the whole year shall be theirs; but on this day we will know only our country, we will consider only those great principles of national polity which have made our country what it is; and through which alone we can hope to maintain what we are and have.

The anniversary of American Independence is distinguished from most festivals of secular

origin, by its moral character. Other days have been set apart for the commemoration of individuals or events. But this commemorates an act—an act, not of violence but of deliberation, not of the sword but of the pen—an act whose significance is strictly and purely moral. It may be regarded as characteristic of this age and people, that while the most striking events of the Revolution, its battles and its triumphs, pass unnoticed ; while Yorktown and Saratoga, so loud in their day, are voiceless now ; the quiet act of that provincial Congress which gave birth to the Declaration you have just heard, is proclaimed to us year after year, from the cannon's mouth, in vollies that sweep the coast from St. John's to Cape Sable —

“ And thence, perhaps, rebounding may
Echo beyond the Mexique bay. ”

I consider this fact as one instance, among many, of that growing ascendancy of the intellectual over the physical in man, which marks and measures the progress of society. As mankind advance, mind gradually prevails over matter. Force is displaced by thought. In the field, it is no longer animal vigor but scientific calculation that carries the day. In civil affairs, moral power preponderates more and more over brute strength. It is no longer the tallest, but, theoretically at least, the wisest that governs. The very symbols of government assume a more and more ideal character. Instead of the *fasces* and the sceptre,

and the grosser ensigns of ancient dominion, we have written constitutions which define the power they represent, showing that mankind are governed by ideas and not by force — a fact equally certain though not equally apparent, in all ages and governments ; in despotic Asia as in republican America ; in the ninth century, under Charlemagne and imperial edicts, as in the nineteenth, under citizen kings and popular assemblies.

Mankind, I say, are governed by ideas and not by force. By these ideas I do not mean abstract speculations — I do not mean conclusions which have been obtained by any conscious process of the understanding, but those views and principles which a people imbibes with its earliest instruction, which it sees reflected from all its institutions, and which it reflects back again in all its habits and associations. These constitute the only true sources of human authority. These give to governments a validity which mere external force could never impart. No external force can hold a nation in subjection any longer than it finds support in the popular idea. We wonder at the passive obedience which the subjects of despotic governments yield to unjust and oppressive enactments. What hinders this people that they rebel not against their rulers ? It is not the fear of armed force that keeps them down, but those hereditary ideas of subjection which centuries of misrule have fixed in their minds and linked with all their associations and ways of life. Until these associations can be broken up, the

condition of that people admits of no permanent improvement. To them revolt itself brings no deliverance. They may conspire and slay their rulers. But what then? No enlargement of privilege, no solid advantage accrues from such violence. To-day a tyrant is deposed, to-morrow a new one has assumed the rein, and the people submit because they know only submission ; and because the idea of arbitrary rule is ever uppermost in their minds.

In the position to which I have now been led, we have a standpoint from which to interpret the whole philosophy of civil history and civil institutions. Every nation is governed by its prevalent ideas or habits of mind. These determine all its movements and shape all its laws. Hence the peculiar character of our revolution and its result in our present condition as a people. When we contrast that movement in American history with similar movements in the history of other nations, and particularly with the subsequent revolution in France, we are struck with what I will venture to call its naturalness. I mean its reason and necessity in the nature of the people, and the comparative ease with which its objects were accomplished, so far as their accomplishment depended on the popular will. It was not so much a revolution as an evolution. It was not an act of desperation, to which the nation were impelled by extreme pressure. We did not wait till stung by actual suffering. It was not here as in revolutionary France, where there existed no

provision for liberty in popular sentiment, no introduction to equal rights, in long-cherished habits and traditions, but where the people, wronged and overburdened, lay still and patient until they felt the griping of hunger in their bowels and the prick of outrage upon their backs. We revolted at the faint shadow of a distant force, attenuated and enfeebled by protecting seas. They rebelled against present want and the fear of death—against wrongs that had lashed into foaming fury whatever is foulest and fellest in unbridled souls. We owed every thing to the character and habits of the people—they owed every thing to the cogency of circumstances. With us it was the honoured of the land—our Adamses, our Otis, our Hancock and our Quincy—that headed the righteous cause; there, *ragged sans culottes*, trained in Bakers' *queues*, and the mothers of Saint Antoine, with ribald tongues and streaming hair, rushing into National Assemblies, led the van in the march of crime. Our revolution, in short, was the healthy offspring of a healthy parent; of theirs it might be said—

“Thy mother felt more than a mother's pain,
And yet brought forth less than a mother's hope;
To wit, an indigest, deformed lump,
Unlike the fruit of such a goodly tree.
Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou wast born,
To signify—thou cam'st to bite the world.”

Whoever will study the condition of these colonies during their dependence on the mother country will find there already developed, in all

the distinctness and force with which they were afterwards asserted, those ideas of liberty and principles of government embodied in our constitution. British aggression was only the precipitating impulse which gave polarity and form to tendencies and attractions long held in solution. The causes which led to our separation would hardly have been deemed sufficient to warrant that step by any people less ripe for independence than we were. The stamp act, which the stern resistance of our fathers forced the British government to repeal before it could fairly take effect, however odious in its principle, was by no means so threatening in its consequences, that the citizens of Boston and of Portsmouth should have ushered it in with ominous ringing of bells and funeral orations to departed Liberty. The additional expense of three-pence a pound in the article of tea, could hardly be regarded as a national calamity. And even the Boston Port Bill, by far the most portentous attack on American liberty, mitigated as it was by sympathy and aid from other towns and States, did not, perhaps, impose a heavier burthen than the country has sustained, with more or less patience, during the last year of republican administration. Had not the people of these States been already free and independent in every habit and feeling of their natures, there would have been no difficulty in collecting that revenue. Peace would have seemed more desirable than the assertion of an abstract right by hopeless op-

position, involving immeasurable evils. The nation would have paid the tax and pocketed the injustice, indemnifying themselves how and where they might. Nay, taxation might have been carried much farther than it was ever contemplated by the British government in relation to this country. The screw whose faintest application, whose very exhibition our fathers resisted so warmly, might have been pressed home through all its spiral revolutions, the whole length of its thread; before it could have screwed to the sticking-point of revolution, men who were not already screwed and braced in every nerve and purpose of their souls, by having breathed, for a century and a half, the thin air of freedom. They were already independent; they always had been so, ever since Smith, and Carver, and Winthrop, and Williams, and Penn. It was for the sake of this independence, that they had come, as they expressed it, "to the outside of the world," and stumbled upon famine and pestilence and the tomahawk. For this they had braved the rude welcome with which the new continent received its future lord, and sown their first fields with death, at Jamestown, at Charlestown and at Plymouth. With a great sum they had obtained this freedom; they had no intention of selling it cheaply. They were already independent; they knew they were, they felt they were; they always had been; God willing, they always meant

to be ; and when the decisive moment came, they had nothing to do but to declare that intention.

The main interest of American history has, naturally enough, accumulated around the crisis which finally divorced us from the mother land. In the contemplation of this period, our attention is diverted from the true date and origin of American liberty. The Declaration of 1776 asserted our independence, but did not by any means create it; neither the sentiment in the mind of the States, nor the reality in their institutions. Both the sentiment and the institutions of the country were as essentially democratic, two hundred years ago, as they are this day. They were the natural growth of the soil. Other sentiment or institutions, or aught unfriendly to liberty, could never gain foothold on these shores. In the first organization of their legislative assemblies, the prophetic sense of the colonists resisted the encroachments of their rulers. "For" said they, "the waves of the sea do not more certainly waste the shore, than the minds of ambitious men are led to invade the liberties of their brethren."* In justice to them, and in the spirit of their comparison, we may say that the stern and rock-bound coast does not more surely repel the advancing surge, than the stern and sturdy souls of the pilgrims repelled the advances of

* Bancroft's History of the United States, 1834, from whence the anecdotes that follow, are principally taken.

civil usurpation. Not only did they strenuously oppose Parliamentary dictation, holding their charter from the King alone, but Royalty itself might not lean too hard on the privileges which that charter guaranteed. In 1620, when King James undertook to appoint a successor to the vacant office of Treasurer to the London Company for Virginia, his interference was resisted as an infringement of the Company's charter, and another candidate was elected in the place of the royal nominee. As the colonies successively kindled their fires along the coast, they successively formed themselves into representative assemblies, in which the popular branch soon acquired the significance it has ever since possessed. In 1619, the first assembly of this kind, ever convened in the western hemisphere, met at Jamestown in Virginia. In 1621 that State received a written Constitution, nearly resembling the present, and essentially the same with those which were afterward adopted in the other colonies. With this Constitution it was ordained, that "after the government of the colony shall have once been framed, no orders of the Court in London shall bind the colony, unless they be, in like manner, ratified by the General Assembly." Three years after, the Assembly decreed, with an early jealousy of arbitrary taxation, that "the Governor shall not lay any taxes or impositions upon the colony, their lands or commodities, other way than by the authority of the General Assembly, to be levied and imposed

as the said Assembly shall appoint." When Cromwell usurped the government of the mother country, Virginia still clung to the house of Stuart, to which she owed her existence and her liberties. The conditions on which she was finally induced to accept the authority of the Protectorate, while they mark the wise policy of the government that proposed them, show how strong the hold, which the love of liberty then had upon the minds of the planters. What force could not effect, was accomplished by a voluntary deed which secured to them their chartered rights and popular government. It was agreed upon surrender, "that the people of Virginia should have all the liberties of the freeborn people of England, should entrust their business, as formerly, to their own General Assembly, and have no taxes levied but by their own burgesses, no forts erected or garrisons maintained but by their own consent." To select from the history of this State one more illustration of the independent feeling which characterized the early settlers; when, in 1658, the Governor and Council declared the dissolution of the Assembly because they had been excluded from its sessions, the Assembly not only denied the legality of the dissolution, but having first, through a committee, solemnly declared the popular sovereignty, they removed the Governor and Council from office, thus asserting their right, not only to make but also to unmake their rulers. The Governor was then re-elected, and by taking the new oath

prescribed to him, acknowledged the validity of his ejection.

Nor was Massachusetts less forward than her sister colony, in securing the independence of her institutions. Here, indeed, the principle of universal suffrage was not, as in Virginia, made the basis of representation. That privilege was restricted to the members of churches within the colony ; in order, it was said, "that the body of the commons might be preserved of honest and good men." This limitation of the elective franchise had its origin in the theological character of the Puritan settlement. Men who had emigrated for the sole purpose of enjoying religious liberty, as they termed it, that is, of establishing a church according to their own notions of ecclesiastical polity, may well be pardoned for adopting every precaution that would serve to secure the purity of their religious institutions. A check on the right of suffrage was considered to be necessary, and doubtless was necessary to guard the church from episcopal influence on the one hand, and from heretical corruptions on the other. Nor was an ordinance of this nature, by any means, so unfriendly to the liberties of the colony as, judging from our standpoint, we might suppose, or as such a restriction would be at the present day. The unanimity of sentiment, in matters of civil polity, was so great, that a limitation of the elective franchise was likely to affect only the ecclesiastical affairs of the colony, and these were cheerfully entrusted to those who

felt the strongest interest in their prosperity. The restriction was not felt to be burdensome, and therefore was not. On the other hand, while due care was taken to assert the prerogative of the church, the Puritans were not slow to resist the influence of the clergy, whenever it came in collision with the democratic tendencies of the times. As early as 1632 it was thought best that there should be an annual choice of Governor and Council; the same incumbents, however, being, as now, liable to re-election. Accordingly they were re-elected that year. But in 1634 the Rev. John Cotton, who had lately come to the colony, opposed the policy of rotation in office, and attempted, by his professional influence, in the election sermon of that year, to prevent the removal of the then magistrates. But notwithstanding the deference paid to the pulpit at that time; when it came to the polls, the old officers were removed and new ones chosen; a fact which shows how little the Puritans at that period, in the conduct of their civil affairs, were disposed to accept dictation, even from those whom their feelings and habits had taught them to revere above all human authority. With the same quick sense of rights, which resisted encroachment at home, did these colonists oppose the interference of the mother country in the management of their concerns. Occasions were not wanting when it was deemed necessary to show a bold front to King and noble. It was in the year just mentioned, that jealousy of English influence in-

roduced the Freeman's Oath, "by which every freeman was obliged to pledge his allegiance, not to King Charles, but to Massachusetts." And when, two years later, some of the English nobility, induced by the example of Sir Henry Vane, and tempted with the hope of gain on this side the water, offered to join their fortunes with the new colony, on condition of an hereditary seat in the Assembly ; the pilgrims answered, with a noble disregard to the immediate advantages of such an alliance ; that " where God blesseth any branch of any noble and generous family with a spirit and gifts fit for government, it would be a taking of God's name in vain, to put such a talent under a bushel ; but if God should not delight to furnish some of their posterity with gifts fit for magistracy, we should expose them rather to reproach and prejudice, and the commonwealth with them, than exalt them to honor, if we should call them forth when God doth not, to public authority."

I cite these instances from the early history of the colonies, to show in what spirit they were founded, and what was the character of their first institutions. If, in later years, there was any change in the character of these institutions, it grew from a necessity imposed by foreign relations, and not from any change in the temper and habits of the people. The people were never other than free in their temper and spirit. Liberty was not with them, as it was and is elsewhere, a speculation to reason about, or a name to swear

by, but a long experience and a habit of life. The noblest examples of it lay at the foundation of their country and at the bottom of their hearts; and never, so far as their will can be gathered from popular acts, were they known to swerve from the old ideal and the early love.

So notorious was the independent spirit of the American colonies, that Mr. Burke, in his well known speech before the British Parliament in 1775, makes it the pivot of his argument in favor of conciliatory measures. "There are only three ways of proceeding," he says, "relative to this stubborn spirit — either to change it as inconvenient, or to prosecute it as criminal, or to comply with it as necessary." The former he pronounces impracticable. "The temper and character which prevail in our colonies are, I am afraid, unalterable by any human art. We cannot, I fear, falsify the pedigree of this fierce people, and persuade them that they are not sprung from a nation in whose veins the blood of freedom circulates. The language in which they would hear you tell them this tale would detect the imposition. Your speech would betray you. An Englishman is the unfittest person on earth to argue another Englishman into Slavery."*

Thus planted and thus nurtured the States grew toward the harvest that was to pluck them from the parent stem; and when the fulness of time came, it found them fully ripe. To this

* Burke's Speech on Conciliation with America.

training, and their long, practical acquaintance with the spirit and use of liberty, that we are to ascribe the peculiar character and consequences of the American Revolution. In which two things are specially noteworthy. First, the absence of those destructive outbursts of popular violence by which revolutions are usually characterized. Not liberty but bondage is the parent of excess. The most convulsive movements of that exciting period developed no tendencies to anarchy or outrage. There was nothing monstrous or inhuman, no *culbute generale*, no breaking forth of the devil in man, to triumph over law and love. No "insurrection against God," no invasion of ancient sanctities, no uprooting of cherished faiths. The very mobs of the Revolution had in them a spirit of justice, and leave the historian little to regret. When the province of Massachusetts occupied the novel position of a civilized and populous community without magistrate or ruler or any acknowledged authority, the old government having been abrogated by the arbitrary policy of England, it was hoped that the prospect of anarchy would instantly enforce complete submission. But what happened? The suspension of public authority brought no suspension of the public peace. No infraction of ancient laws gave reason to apprehend the necessity of invoking the protection of that force whose authority the State had disavowed. All things went on as before. The citizens met in their unchartered conventions

and passed resolutions, and recommended measures which had all the force of laws with a people in whose experience law and liberty were but diverse operations of one spirit;—showing what a mere formula is legislation, where good sense and good will rule, and how, as Mr. Burke says, “it is obedience which constitutes government and not the names by which it is called.” I shall not attempt to contrast with this sobriety those atrocities which, fifteen years later, under the name of the French Revolution, amazed the world, and threatened to make liberty a name for outrage and crime. I shall rather ask your attention to another characteristic feature in our own Revolution, and that is, the ready formation of our Constitution from elements then existing in the minds and habits of the people. And here it is, that the connection, to which I have alluded, between the form of a government and the prevalent ideas, or moral character, of the people governed, is most apparent. The American Constitution has been sometimes represented as a system formed upon abstract principles. A late traveller in this country cites it as an instance of a purely *a priori* scheme of polity, carried into successful operation.* This view, it seems to me, entirely mistakes the true origin of our Government. So far from being an *a priori* system framed on abstract principles, it has probably less of this character than pertains to most gov-

* Harriet Martineau; Society in America.

ernments ; less, certainly, than the Constitutions of the several States. It was not a theory, hatched in the brains of speculative men, but a system of policy which owed its origin entirely to existing circumstances and obvious necessities. Whatever of theory there is in it, was of *ex post facto* creation. All the elements lay close at hand. The union of the States was spontaneous, the result of their position. This furnished the primary fact which the first conventions did but express. The Federal compact defined the duties and relations implied in that union ; and the Constitution of 1788, consummated that compact with permanent provisions for the fulfilment of its terms, but without changing the character or policy of the States themselves. The Government of the country, so far as its daily operation on the citizen is concerned, was essentially the same before the adoption of the Constitution, as after. When, therefore, we speak of our institutions as an experiment, let it be remembered that they are an experiment for whose success, two hundred years of actual operation furnish no inconsiderable security. Had it not been so, had not the Constitution originated, as it did, in the circumstances of the times and the character of the people, had it been a mere theory founded in speculation, it never could have had a moment's authority. It must have failed in its first application. For no fact in human experience is better established, than the impracticability of such theories. It is not in the power of man,

departing from no government at all, to frame one, *a priori*, which shall apply to any given people. Governments are not formed, but grow. "All the most important institutions of the world," says an acute French writer on this subject,* "are the result of circumstances, and not of deliberation." Man not only does not possess the power to create institutions, but he has not even the power to create their names. And unless the name which an institution bears is subsequent to the thing, and the necessary product of the thing, it may be regarded as a sure sign that the institution so designated will not work, will not live. We have thus in the nomenclature of governments, the sign of their origin and of their destiny. Constitutions formed on abstract principles, have names invented for the purpose, antecedent to the thing.

Of such bubble Constitutions, which burst as soon as blown, history, and particularly modern history, has many examples. Men of speculative minds, in all times, have loved to blow them for their own amusement. The English philosopher, Locke, blew one for the people of South Carolina, with three orders of nobility, which they blew to pieces as soon as it was wafted to them. The kingdoms south of us, Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia, are blowing new ones continually, and never yet can produce one that

* Compte de Maistre. *Essai sur Le Principe Générateur des Constitutions Politiques.*

will hold together. But the most remarkable effort in this kind, was that which the Constituent Assembly in France, during the Revolution, after twenty-nine months of diligent inflation, gave to their country, and which immediately dissolved by its extreme tension.

On the other hand, Governments, which are formed of existing elements, and have their origin in the character and habits of the people governed, are known by this, that the names by which their functions are called, are not made for the occasion, but have either grown from the institutions they designate, or else, having previously existed, are assumed by those institutions as their most fitting and natural designation. Whoever will apply this theory to American institutions will find, in the names which they bear, the history of their origin, and the promise of their perpetuity. Names, which are destined to be permanent, and to have a wide significance in the history of mankind, like the institutions they designate, are not made, but grow. They are accidental, and, for the most part, humble in their origin, and derive from some secondary meaning, the importance which they acquire. The word, throne, which, for more than two thousand years has been the symbol of despotic power, meant originally a footstool, then a seat with a footstool attached to it, one of the earliest distinctions of Royalty. It had probably, the same force as the term "Chair," in Representative Assemblies; and "Chair," may one day, by

the same process, become as significant as throne. So, to cite an instance of an opposite character, drawn from our own institutions, the word, Caucus, is supposed to have originated in the meetings of some ship-caulkers, held more than a hundred years ago, in the ship-yard at Boston. Having outgrown its original application, this word has now come to designate an institution which, though not one of the written functions of our Government, is vitally connected with all its functions, and lies at the foundation of all its movements. I accept as a good omen the existence of such a word in our political vocabulary. As it is impossible to frame a theory of government which shall be found applicable to any given time or people, so it is impossible to transplant the government of one age or country, and graft it upon another. Suppose, for example, the people of Turkey, smitten with the love of liberty, and enamoured of American prosperity, should undertake to copy our institutions. Suppose a few revolutionary Spirits to succeed in overthrowing the existing Government. Suppose the Sultan converted into a President. Instead of the Sublime Porte, there is a House of Representatives; the Cadis are become District Judges, the Agas, Captains of Militia. All this might be done, but the moment the new system was to take effect, it would be found to have no effect at all. It would be found that Asiatic ideas had nothing in common with American institutions, that the new wine was too smart for

the old bottles. It would be found, in short, just as impossible to establish a Republican Government in despotic Turkey, as it would be, at the present moment, to establish an absolute Monarchy in the United States. The only efficient government is that which arises spontaneously in the character and habits of a nation. It was owing to their utter neglect of this fundamental principle, that the theorists of the French Revolution failed in their attempts to regenerate France. They could pull down, but they could not build up. Hence, those wild abortions, which under the name of Constitutions, there and elsewhere, have been sent into the world, as if to show the incompetence of man to originate those ideas which he and all his institutions can only reflect.

We owe the success of our Revolution, in establishing for us an independent, and, as we trust, a permanent form of government, not to any nice arrangement of functions, or careful balance of powers in that instrument, but mainly, I apprehend, to the spirit of liberty which animated the people, for whom that system was framed. And it is to this spirit, Fellow Citizens, that we must look for the perpetuity of our institutions. We do wrong, if we suffer ourselves to depend on the perfection of our Government, for the preservation of our liberties. What is to preserve the Government? It is not the body that makes the spirit, but the spirit the body. It is not your Temperance Societies that make tem-

perance, nor your Anti-Slavery Societies that make anti-slavery. These societies could never have existed, had not the sentiment which they express, existed before them. In the same manner and for the same reason, it is not the free government that makes the free-man, but the man the government. Let the sentiment of liberty become extinct in the breasts of this people to-day, and to-morrow the government has become a despotism. Whatever may be the name by which it is called, or the forms under which it is administered, it is no longer free. The form of a government affords no true criterion of its character. There may be a form of freedom where no freedom is. Government more despotic never existed, than the French Democracy in the reign of terror. When Cæsar Augustus usurped the supreme control of the Roman State, he was careful to leave unchanged, the old Republican forms. He waived the imperial name, while most intent on securing the imperial power. He even reformed what seemed to be encroachment on the popular liberties in his predecessor. He caused his authority to be confirmed to him from term to term, by new elections. He flattered the ear of the nation with the long familiar names of Consul, and Senate, and Tribune, while, gradually concentrating in his sole person, the various powers intended in those functions ; he secretly undermined the government, when most he seemed to maintain it. There was a time

when this could not have been. There was a time and a spirit once,

“ That would have brooked
The eternal devil, to keep his State in Rome,
As easily as a king.”

But the liberties of the nation had been already undermined by bribery and corruption. Luxury and vice had opened the door for usurpation and the Cæsars. The Roman people had ceased to exist. The body was there, but the soul had fled with Marius and with Cato.

Freedom is not in the government, but in the people. In your own breast, or no where, is its citadel. There, or no where, it must be secured. There are not wanting, among the multiplied interests and complex influences of the present day, tendencies that threaten the stability of our institutions. Without being

“ Over exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils,”

it would be easy to point out these dangers, in the ambition of your politicians, in the love of office, in the love of money, in the extravagance of fashion, in the disproportionate wealth of some and the consequent dependance of others, in the growing luxury of our cities, in the readiness with which we ape the follies and vices of elder nations. I might point them out, in those tendencies which belong to human nature in every condition, and in those which a republican

form of government especially favours and fosters. "I found," says de Toqueville, "in the United States that restlessness of heart which is natural to men, where all ranks are nearly equal, and the chances of elevation are the same to all. I found the democratic feeling of envy, expressed under a thousand different forms." He allows, indeed, that the Americans have made great and partially successful efforts to correct these imperfections, and to counteract, as far as possible, the natural defects of Democracy. It may be questioned, however, whether any check which the institutions of a country may provide, will be found adequate to control an evil which has its origin in the character of the individual. It was this same democratic feeling of envy, which, more than any other principle, hastened the downfall of the old republics. In Athens, particularly, the operation of this principle was continually manifested in the prosecution of those men, and the destruction of those institutions whose influence was most essential to the welfare of the State. The Athenian could not endure that a fellow citizen should be called just, and therefore moved the expulsion of him who was so designated. Because Pericles was not a member of the Areopagus, he procured a vote of the people by which the jurisdiction of that ancient tribunal was abridged; and when arrived at the head of affairs; breaking through the restrictions which had hitherto regulated its appointments, he made himself by force a member, and thus

opened a breach through which corruption soon entered, and authority went out. The Areopagus was the Supreme Court of Athens. With this first invasion of its privileges, dates the decline of that State. I say there are not wanting in the elements of our national character, the materials from which gyves and bonds may be made. We have no security in our institutions. We have no protection from abroad. We have nothing to fear from abroad. Our only ground of fear is in ourselves. Our only protection is self-government. "Men are qualified for civil liberty," says Mr. Burke again, "just in proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites, in proportion as their love for justice is above their rapacity, in proportion as their soundness and sobriety of understanding is above their vanity and presumption, in proportion as they are more disposed to listen to the counsels of the wise and good, than to the flattery of knaves. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free ; their fashions forge their fetters."*

In alluding to these subjects, I would not be thought—least of all, on this day, would I be thought to entertain any serious apprehension as to the stability of our national blessings. I should be unworthy to enjoy them, did I feel any. In a republican government, mistrust of the people, is treason against the State. Instead,

* Letter to a member of the National Assembly.

therefore, of perverting the joy of this feast, by dwelling on the evil that may be, let us rather consider the brighter aspects in our horoscope, and contemplate the far more probable good, which the future has in store for us, and for all men. The season is sacred to hope. Its office is to inspire new confidence in the destinies of our country and our race. While it quickens the desire, it claims the belief that the blessings we now celebrate, may be ever more widely diffused and more fully developed, as year after year unlocks new faculties of Nature and of mind. When we contemplate what the last fifty years have done for human culture and human happiness, we involuntarily ask, what the next fifty, or the next hundred, shall add to the account. It is not till within these centuries, that the idea of progress in human affairs, has dawned upon mankind. That the race, as a race, has a destiny to accomplish—that society, as it exists at any one time, is not an accident, but the necessary result of all that has been, and the necessary condition of all that is to be—that the earth, which witnessed the first unfolding, is destined to witness the final development of all that is in man—these are views and facts which have but lately come within the sphere of human observation. They are still but faintly discerned in the distant horizon. And yet there was always progress in the world. Always, since the flood, there has been a steady procession in human affairs, a continuous development of the human

mind. Single nations have decayed, single races have died out, single arts have stood still, but Humanity never. There never was a period in the world's history, so dark and dismal and diseased, but there was progress somewhere. Whatever stagnation there may have been on the surface, there was always life below. If it went out here, it burst forth there. When one phase of human culture waned, another was ready to dawn. When one set of ideas became extinct, another was starting into life. When the old world and the old faith died out, the new was there. When existing influences were insufficient to check the deep corruption of the times, some new influence stepped in and saved the race. And so, under ever new influences and aspects; never abandoned by the Powers above, but always aided and refreshed, as its day required; with varying fortunes, in various lands, the unconscious race has crept or sped, but never staid. By the Ganges, and the Nile, the Alpheus, the Tiber, the Rhine, and the Potomac, it has marked its traces and its triumphs. Six thousand years, the sun and the stars have watched it moving; but never until now — with the momentum acquired in these latter years — has it felt its motion. Now, first awakened to self-consciousness, Humanity is moving on, with new speed and conscious aims, to the fulfilment of its high calling. When we trace the progress of human culture in time past, we find that there has always been some one tribe or people, to whom

this culture was specially committed. The Hindoos, the Greeks, the Romans, the Franks, have had their turn. At present, the Anglo-Saxon race bears this charge. To them, above all the tribes that are in the earth, are entrusted the great interests of Humanity. The only race that can be considered as a rival with this, is the Russian. But that nation, though advancing with portentous strides toward the consolidation of its own vast empire, and the filling up of its own vast territory, has not yet begun, by means of its colonies or its literature, to exercise a world-influence. The Anglo-Saxon race, on the other hand, emanating from a kingdom of the most inconsiderable dimensions, have, within the last three centuries, possessed themselves of the fairest portions of the earth. From that small island have gone forth influences that girdle the world. In each of the five great divisions of the globe, this race is present with its language and its arts. Never, since the Roman empire, did one people attain such sway.

“ Wind may not sweep, nor wild wave foam”,

where that sway is not felt. In either hemisphere, English culture is now the moving force, and the last hope of man. It would be interesting to follow out the probable effects of this culture in other lands,—to see this indefatigable race gradually displacing the influences and the tribes, which have hitherto retarded the progress of man,—to see them climbing the Himmaleh,

piercing central Africa, stretching along the mountains of the moon, and overspreading Austral Asia, with their beneficent sway,—awakening once more the wizard Genius of the East, and carrying, wherever the sun shines or the winds blow, the sacred gifts of Freedom.

But the limits of this occasion will not allow us to lose ourselves in the boundless prospect which these views unfold. Our attention is called to that portion of the race in which we are more particularly interested, to which we belong. The prospects which our own country unfolds, are sufficient to task the boldest imagination. On this subject much has been said and sung. The mind of this nation is prone to revel in the future. We love to sketch the rising prospects of our land, and are sometimes accused of overdraining, in the draughts we make on coming years. It may well be doubted, however, whether all that has been said or sung, or dreamed, on this subject, has yet reached the mark of truth and soberness. It is not easy to overstate the limits of American increase. Fifty years have now elapsed since the present Constitution was adopted by the thirteen States, which then composed the Union. Within that period, the thirteen States have become twenty-six, and the three millions, thirteen millions. According to the rate of increase, at which the population of this country has hitherto advanced, fifty years more will give fifty millions, and a hundred years more will give two hundred millions. Mean-

while, if I rightly interpret the course of events, the Anglo-American race will have displaced or absorbed every other race in the northern division of this continent, below the sixtieth degree; and the whole vast territory, between Hudson's Bay and the Isthmus of Darien, will have become the habitation of a people, sprung from the same stock, governed by the same institutions, speaking the same tongue;—a fact as yet unknown in the annals of man, and whose bearing on the destiny of man, no tongue can tell, no thought can guess. “The vision,” says one of our statesmen, “is too magnificent to be fully borne.” What is to be the condition of this mighty empire? We have no sufficient data from which to calculate the probable duration of our Federal Government. Our present views and feelings crave its continuance; and every good citizen, I think, will feel it his duty, at present, so far as in him lies, to promote that end. But we should do great injustice to our national character, we should belie the progress we have already made in the science of self-government, and the right apprehension of our own interests, if we supposed that the dissolution of the Federal Government must necessarily be attended with the dissolution of our liberties, and the downfall of our prosperity; that it is impossible in the nature of things, that these now confederate Republics should dwell together, unconfederate in form, but leagued in spirit and in fact; that the written articles cannot be annulled, without annulling

also, the elder covenant of brotherly love. As if two or more enlightened and Christian families could not live side by side without a formal constitution, or as if the time would never come, when whole States shall be composed of enlightened and Christian families. I have not so learned the progress of society, nor do I believe that war is the only possible condition of border States, or that mankind, after so many thousand years' teaching, are never to understand the policy of peace. I believe that all the elements which are essential to our prosperity, will remain to us, whatever changes may take place in our political relations. One who has scanned with a curious eye these rising Republics—I refer again to M. de Toqueville—has thought to observe that the union of the States is becoming stronger, while the Federal Government is growing weaker. I am not prepared to endorse this conclusion, as a matter of fact, but it seems to me to be a fair deduction from the general principles which govern society at the present day. Union is the leading tendency of this age. Individuals, families, states and nations, are drawing nearer to each other. Every where, mankind are coming to discern more clearly that they have but one interest, and to feel more intensely that they are heirs of one hope, and brothers of one blood. On the other hand, and in consequence, chiefly, of this increased attraction, governments, in the most civilized parts of the world, are gradually growing weaker, and will continue to grow

weaker, just in proportion as mankind are united among themselves; for the very obvious reason, that strong governments are not needed where such union exists. It is only because mankind are not perfectly united among themselves, that governments are needed at all. A perfect state of society would be one, in which friendly agreement should be the only rule. Things which cohere of themselves, require not that they should be tied — and whenever society shall have attained that perfect union to which human culture is constantly tending, there will be no government but education. Our Federal Government was instituted for certain specific purposes. Much good has been effected by it, and doubtless, much more is still to be effected. But if ever the time shall come when those purposes can be better answered in some other way, or when they shall cease to be important, the Government will dissolve of itself, as the capsule bursts when the seed is ripe. The real union having become mature, the formal union will no longer be needed. Whatever may be the form of our Government, the national character will probably remain the same, in all its essential features, for an hundred years to come. And so long as the national character remains the same, we shall continue to grow, we shall continue to prosper. And, what is of far deeper consequence than the growth of territory, or the superficial extension of our present prosperity, we may contemplate, I think, in the more perfect

development of those principles which have made us what we are, a solid increase and a more general diffusion of the blessings we enjoy — a prosperity which shall extend inward and downward, as well as outward; a prosperity from which none shall be excluded, to whom there is given a soul to feel, and a will to strive. We have very imperfectly apprehended the meaning and value of American principles, and American institutions, if we imagine that they have already accomplished all that they are destined to accomplish for human improvement: especially for the improvement and elevation of those classes to whom the present unequal distribution of earthly good has assigned the lower walks of labour and of life. The perfect equality of the human race is the idea which lies at the basis of our Constitution. I look in vain for the realization of this equality in the present condition of society among us. I see striking, far-reaching, fearful inequalities. I see high and low, rich and poor, vulgar and respectable. I see some born to every possession that can gladden and embellish life, and some born to every privation that can make it loathsome. Some are born to luxury and ease, some are born to drudgery and filth. "Some go forth sandalled and mantled, to walk on smooth terraces and velvet lawns, while some are doomed to tread the Alpine paths of life, with bare feet and naked breast, against driving misery, through stormy sorrows, jaded, mangled and chilled." And what is worse, far worse,

some are born to rule and some to serve, some are born to knowledge and some to ignorance; some, I had almost said, are born to virtue and some to vice. Was it for this, that Heaven sent to struggling, grovelling man, the message of its love, and opened to him in this new world, a new school and a new hope? Not so, Fellow Citizens, not so, shall the ends of this revelation be answered. Not so, shall the deep wants of this age be satisfied, and the long-cherished, long deferred hope of humanity fulfilled! The time must come, when the unrighteous distinctions, which now divide the family of man, shall be softened, at least, if not removed. Softened by education, by charity, by increase of privilege on one side and abatement of pretension on the other. The time must come, when, if there be still rich and poor, there shall no longer be high and low, master and servant, vulgar and respectable, ignorant and refined; when a more liberal culture shall comprehend and reconcile these painful discrepancies, and gather into one fold of impartial regard, all classes, employments, grades and names. The time shall come, when new inventions, lightening labor and redeeming time, shall remove from the lot of the poor, those obstructions which have hitherto checked the free circulation of social privilege and brotherly love. Their desert shall gush with new resources. The very rock on which their feet now stumble, some kind prophet shall smite to healthful issues. For them

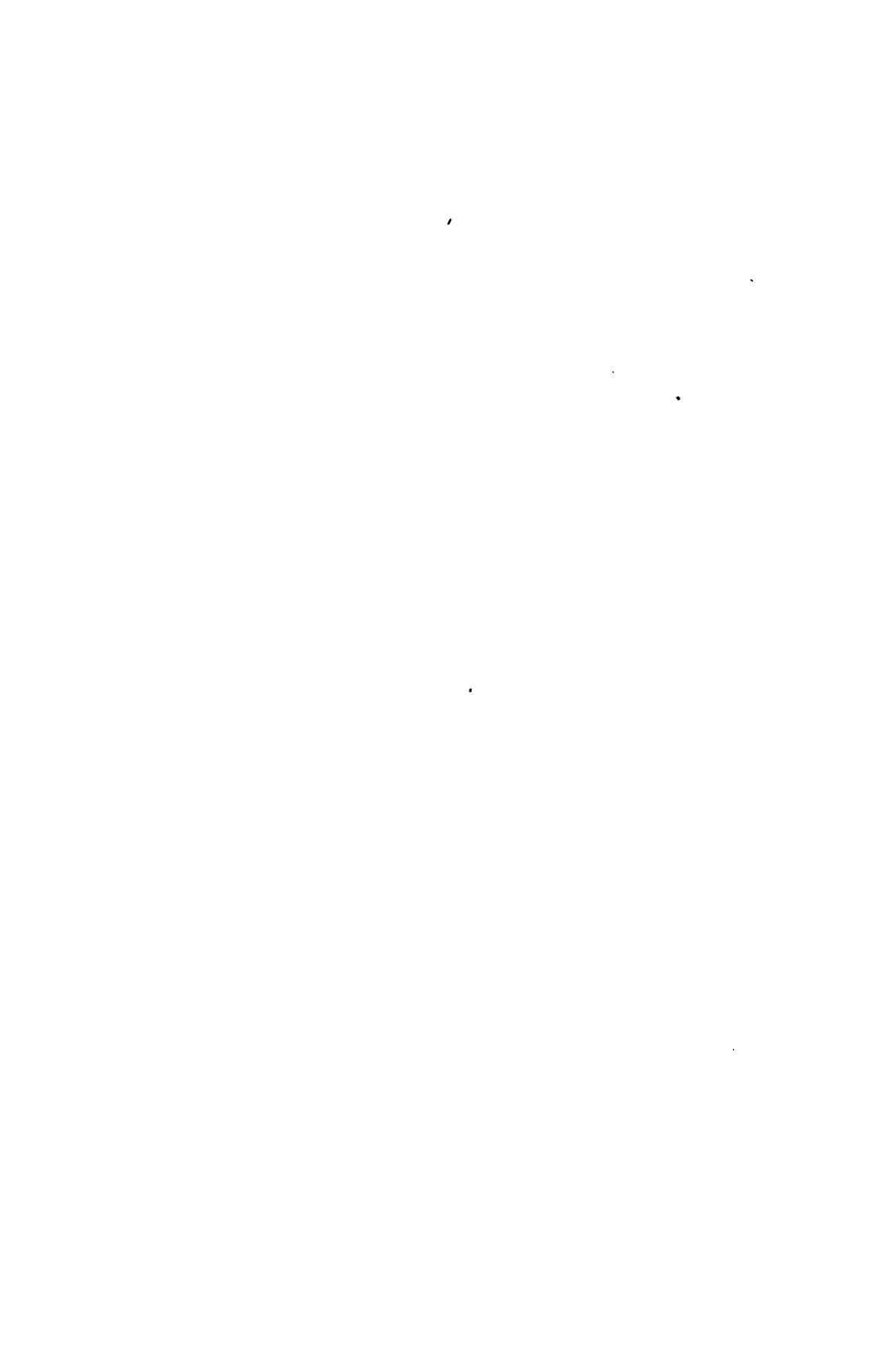
too, shall be opened the everlasting fountains of intellectual life. The labouring man shall wipe the sweat from his brow, and steep his bread in the cooling wave; the meanest shall drink thereof, and be filled. In those days, a more extended mechanism shall take from the overtired their heavy load, and abridge the hours of manual service. Wood and iron shall serve for sinews and for bones. The gases shall steam up from the bowels of the earth and relieve the toilworn hand. Unseen powers shall labour and drudge. Man shall no longer say to his brother, "thou art not worthy to sit at meat with me, I will have no fellowship with thee for thy works' sake;" for the low necessities of life shall no longer preclude refinement of manner and dignity of person. The sacred frame of man shall no longer be bent and seamed with servile tasks. Different functions shall no longer have different spheres of privilege and honour. Moral worth shall then constitute the only distinction; and the soul, in every state and station, shall have that scope and reverence which God intended, when, from the bosom of his own eternity, he sent it forth, to dwell in space and to work in time.

These, Fellow Citizens, are some of the fruits which I dare to look for, in the full and final unfolding of American principles. And permit me to say, that, did I not look for such things, I should esteem all that has yet been won by the blood of our martyrs, and the labours of those

who, in time past, have toiled for our salvation, as of little worth. All that now is, I esteem only as the condition of something better, that is to be, — as a step towards that perfection to which the race is slowly, but surely moving. I speak not of these things as near at hand. They lie yet far removed in the depths of time. Our eyes shall not see, our hands shall not pluck these latter fruits. When a few more years have been added to the sum of those which have chronicled our country's growth, we shall rest in her bosom. "Life's fitful fever over," we shall reckon no more of human distinctions and earthly wrongs. Unheeded by us, this day shall come round in its season, never more to break our slumbers with its early tumult. Unheeded by us, our country's banner shall wave: but our children's children shall see new stars and new honours in its ample folds; and a nation such as the world has never yet known — millions upon millions of free, enlightened, and virtuous citizens, enjoying equal rights and equal blessings, filling every valley and nook of this vast territory with the proofs of their wisdom, and the fruits of their genius — shall then, perhaps, celebrate as realities, what we can only contemplate as dreams.









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